

What is claimed is:

1. A method for selling goods and services in conjunction with the Internet, comprising:

receiving session information from an enterprise's website about a customer's
5 session on the website, the session information comprising the products the customer
is searching;

receiving any customer information on the customer from the enterprise;

determining from the session information and any customer information that
the customer constitutes a sales opportunity appropriate for assistance from a sales
10 associate;

matching the customer with at least one sales associate;

facilitating communication for a sales transaction between the customer and
the matched sales associate via the Internet;

receiving sales information; and

15 providing the session, customer, and sales information to the matched sales
associate based on the particular sales opportunity with the customer.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the customer information is received from the
enterprise.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the customer information is received from a
20 third party.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the session information is parsed and
segmented in accordance with product accreditations achieved by sales associates,

whereby each sales associate is presented with different types of sales opportunities depending on the product accreditation of the sales associate.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein sales opportunities are determined from a single website.

5 6. The method of claim 1, wherein sales opportunities are determined from a plurality of websites all operated by a single enterprise and the sales associates are employed by the enterprise.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein sales opportunities are determined from a plurality of websites all operated by different enterprises and the sales associates are independent from the enterprises.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising;
facilitating bridging out from Internet communication between the customer and sales associate to another mode of communication between the customer and sales associate.

15 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the bridged mode of communication occurs over a public switched telephone network

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the bridged mode of communication occurs over the Internet via an IP-based communication protocol.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the bridged mode of communication occurs over a wireless communication network.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the sales associate has the capability to manipulate the customer's navigation of the Internet.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the sales associate is provided session, customer, and sales information on web pages via the Internet.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the sales information comprises product information, catalog information, and external information.

5 15. The method of claim 1, wherein some of the sales information is obtained from the enterprise.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein some of the sales information is obtained from a third party.

10 17. The method of claim 1, wherein the sales information provided to the sales associate is pertinent to the sales opportunity based on the characteristics of the sales opportunity.

15 18. The method of claim 1, wherein the sales information provided to the sales associate is associated with the results of a previous sales opportunity and the association produces a dynamic re-ranking of the aggregate sales information available in terms of selling effectiveness, and results of the re-ranking are automatically incorporated into the sales information provided to a next sales associate presented with a similar sales opportunity.

19. A method of matching an online customer on a enterprise's website with at least one online sales associate, comprising:

20 receiving session information on a customer session on the enterprise website;
receiving any customer information on the customer;
receiving sales associate profile information on the sales associates;
determining an appropriate matching rule set to apply;

applying the rule set to the session, customer, and sales associate information;
formulating a matching score for each sales associate; and
ranking the sales associates based on the matching score.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein determining the appropriate matching rule
5 set to apply is based on the session information.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
dynamically re-ranking the sales associates' rankings based on actual
experiences within the system.

22. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
10 alerting a sales associate to contact the customer.

23. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
alerting more than one sales associate to contact the customer.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising:
allowing only the first sales associate to contact the customer to communicate
15 with the customer.

25. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
alerting more than one sales associate that the customer can be contacted.

26. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
alerting a sales associate that the customer must be contacted.

20 27. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
providing the matching scores to the sales associates.

28. The method of claim 19, wherein the rule set is determined by the enterprise.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the enterprise determines the rule set based the enterprise's sales and marketing strategies.
30. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
modifying the rule set.
- 5 31. The method of claim 30, wherein the rule set is modified by the enterprise via the Internet.
32. The method of claim 30, wherein the rule is set is dynamically modified.
33. The method of claim 19, wherein the matching score is dynamically calculated by determining, for each sales associate, the score for each rule within the rule set,
10 multiplying the score for each rule based on the relative importance of the rule to get a weighted rule score, adding the weighted rule scores.
34. A method of gathering sales information, comprising:
monitoring online sales transactions between sales associates and customers;
indexing and ranking information and sales techniques used by the sales
15 associate during the transaction to create best practices information; and
storing the best practices information.
35. The method of claim 34, further comprising:
providing a sales associate with the best practices information during an online sales transaction based on a particular sales transaction.
- 20 36. The method of claim 34, wherein the best practices information comprises product information, sales techniques, and external materials.
37. The method of claim 34, further comprising:
providing an enterprise with the best practices information.

38. The method of claim 37, wherein the best practices information is provided to the enterprise via the Internet.

39. The method of claim 37, wherein the best practices information is provided to the enterprise offline.

5 40. The method of claim 34, further comprising:

dynamically re-ranking the best practices information based further sales transactions.

41. A method of gathering sales information from an online sales transaction between a sales associate and a customer, comprising:

10 monitoring online sales transactions between sales associates and customers;
indexing and ranking all information and sales techniques used by the sales associate during the transaction to create best practices information;
storing the best practices information; and
storing the outcome of the sales transaction.

15 42. The method of claim 41, further comprising:

re-ranking all information and sales techniques based on subsequent online sales transactions; and

continually distributing the best practices information to sales associates, whereby the sales associates receive the current best practices information.

20 43. The method of claim 41, further comprising:

storing the methods of communication used during the sales transaction.

44. The method of claim 41, wherein the best practices information comprises product information, sales techniques, and external materials.

45. The method of claim 41, wherein the outcome of the sales transaction comprises the products sold and the amount of the sale.

46. The method of claim 45, wherein the outcome of the sales transaction further comprises the commission earned by the sales associate.

5 47. The method of claim 41, further comprising:

providing a sales associate with the best practices information during an online sales transaction based on a particular sales transaction.

48. The method of claim 41, further comprising:

providing an enterprise with the best practices information, sales transaction
10 information, and method of communication information.

49. The method of claim 48, wherein the best practices information, sales transaction information, and method of communication information is provided to the enterprise via the Internet.

50. The method of claim 48, wherein the best practices information, sales
15 transaction information, and method of communication information is provided to the enterprise offline.

51. The method of claim 41, further comprising:

dynamically re-ranking the best practices information based on further sales transactions.

20 52. A method of registering sales associates to assist customers in online sales transactions, the method comprising:

receiving a registration request from a sales associate;

receiving sales associate information from the sales associate;

analyzing sales associate information to determine if the sales associate is an acceptable candidate to assist customers;

notifying the sales associate that the sales associate is an acceptable candidate upon a determination that the sales associate is an acceptable candidate; and

5 matching the sales associate with a customer browsing on an enterprise's website.

53. The method of claim 52, further comprising:

requesting credit and background information on the sales associate from a third party; and

10 receiving credit and background information on the sales associate from a third party.

54. The method of claim 52, further comprising:

receiving a schedule of availability from the sales associate.

55. The method of claim 52, further comprising:

15 receiving method of contact preferences from the sales associate.

56. A method of registering sales associates to assist customers in online sales transactions, the method comprising:

receiving a registration request from a sales associate;

receiving sales associate information from the sales associate;

20 receiving enterprise sales associate information comprising product accreditations from an enterprise employing the sales associate;

analyzing sales associate information, enterprise sales associate information,
and testing results to determine if the sales associate is an acceptable candidate to
assist customers; and

notifying the sales associate that the sales associate is an acceptable candidate
5 upon a determination that the sales associate is an acceptable candidate.

57. The method of claim 56, further comprising:

ranking the sales associate based on sales associate information and enterprise
sales associate information; and

matching the sales associate with a customer browsing on the enterprise's
10 website.

58. The method of claim 56, further comprising;

testing the sales associate to determine product accreditations.

59. A method of accrediting sales associates to assist customers in online sales
transactions, the method comprising:

15 receiving an accreditation request from a sales associate;

delivering appropriate testing materials to the sales associate;

receiving the completed testing materials from the sales associate;

analyzing the completed testing materials from the sales associate;

updating a record for the sales associate to indicate a new level of
20 accreditation; and

matching the sales associate with a customer browsing on an enterprise's
website based on the accreditation.

60. A method for selling goods and services in conjunction with the Internet, comprising:

receiving session information from a plurality of websites about customers' sessions on the websites, the session information comprising the products the customers are searching;

receiving any customer information on the customers;

for each customer, determining from the session information and any customer information that the customer constitutes a sales opportunity appropriate for assistance from a sales associate;

matching the customers with at least one sales associate;

facilitating communication for a sales transaction between the customers and the matched sales associates via the Internet;

receiving sales information for each sales opportunity; and

providing the session, customer, and sales information to the matched sales associates based on the particular sales opportunity with the customer.

61. The method of claim 60, wherein the websites are all operated by a single enterprise and the sales associates are employed by the enterprise.

62. The method of claim 60, wherein the websites all operated by different enterprises and the sales associates are independent from the enterprises.